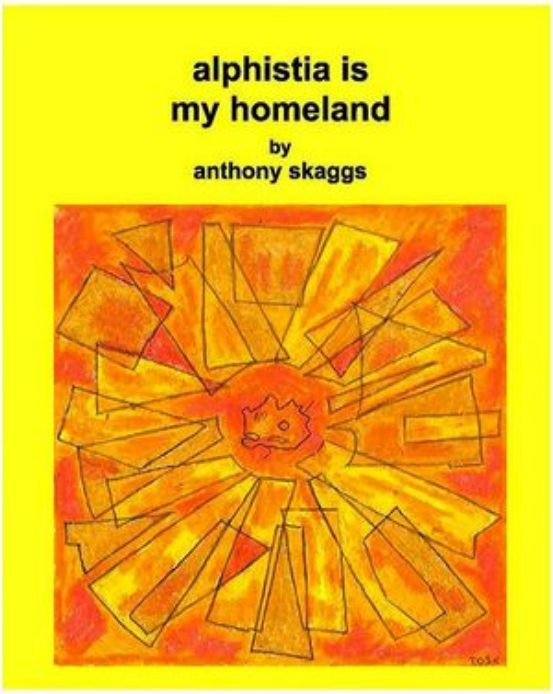
anthony skaggs



Anthony Skaggs created Alphistia as a 9 year old boy in Newport Kentucky. Then, as now, he has always needed a refuge from the world around him. He worked as a librarian for several decades in New York City, and retired to Champaign Illinois in 2012. Through the years, he has visited 25 different countries, and armchair-traveled to at least 150 more. Heart and soul though, he remains always in Alphistia. This book explains why.

alphistia@gmail.com
www.alphistia.com

ALPHISTIA IS MY HOMELAND
By Anthony Skaggs

2024

INTRODUCTION

Project Alphistia

Alphistia is a country in search of both land and people.

The story begins in 1967, when a nine year old boy created a language and imaginary country in Newport, Kentucky. Soon he was building little “towns” in his family’s backyard, and was making booklets, coins, printed money, a flag, newspapers and magazines, filmstrips, etc. Neighborhood children participated too, and this child’s play went on until late 1973. Teenage angst took its toll by then, and from early 1974 onward, Alphistia became virtual. In 1995, Project Alphistia was established to present this geofictional country to the world, largely through the internet.

A New Dark Ages

The fall of Soviet-style communism in 1989-91 did not mean “The End of History”, with the inevitable creation of stable democratic states worldwide, and capitalist prosperity for all. Far from it!

Recent years have shown that even the most “democratic countries” can drift into dangerous decline, as demagogues exploit internal tensions, and authoritarian impulses are indulged all around the world. Economically, the neoliberal globalization project has been a colossal failure. Social dissatisfaction is rampant worldwide.

The world is on the brink of political, social, and environmental collapse, and all of this has been avoidable. Unfortunately, the harsh lessons of the twentieth century are being ignored in these first decades of the twenty-first. It is still to be determined if mankind can survive its enormous hubris.

The word in the Alphistian language for this collapse is “Klava”. The goal of Project Alphistia is not to save the world from this new Dark Ages. Like monks in the early Middle Ages, Alphistians want to preserve what they can of civilization, and as far as possible survive these times of troubles. It would not be a monastery, but a small country trying to survive in a maddening world.

A New Society

All the territory in the world is today claimed by nation states, although new countries have formed in recent decades, peacefully or not. Borders can be changed however, and in uncertain times, it is impossible to predict what a map of the world will look like 25 years from now.

Alphistia would be established only by peaceful means, likely in a power vacuum resulting from the collapse of nation states and supranational entities in the near future. It is possible Alphistia would not even be a sovereign state, but on land belonging to another country, but with near full autonomy. Examples of this are places like The Faroe Islands or Greenland, and their connection with their “mother country” Denmark.

Project Alphistia would then implement its Action Plan, to bring its members to its new territory from around the world, construct the infrastructure, and begin the creation of a new society. Alphistia would not

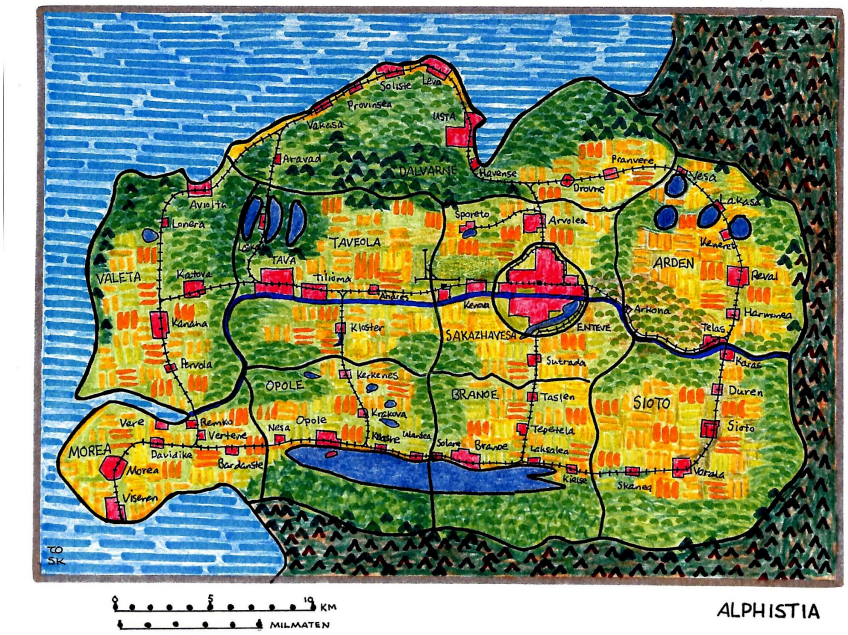
have a petroleum-dependent economy, but would instead rely on electric power from renewable resources, primarily hydro. It would be self-sufficient in food production and most goods and services needed for everyday life. It would emphasize quality of life for its citizens instead of acquisition of consumer goods. It would provide economic and social stability, and stable democratic governance.

This booklet describes Alphistia as a country 15 years after its founding, sometime in the near future. In that respect Alphistia is still geofictional, but the following chapters provide a general idea of what Alphistia might be like.

Anthony W. Skaggs

alphistia@gmail.com

www.alphistia.com



Chapter 1 - LAND AND PEOPLE

Geography

Alphistia is a small country in the northern hemisphere. It has an area of approximately 800 square kilometers (320 square miles). From east to west, it measures 38 km (24 miles) at its longest, and 26 km (16 miles) from north to south.

Alphistia has a hilly terrain, with some flat areas in its central and southern parts. There are no real mountains inside Alphistia itself, but just east and south of the border are uplands that become mountainous within a short distance. The northern and western border of the country is the reservoir of a hydroelectric dam, called Lake Usta. Internally is the Sioto River, which runs in an east-west direction. There are smaller rivers and creeks that run into the Sioto River or the reservoir. There are a number of lakes inside the country: the Arden Lakes in the province of that name, the Sestrean Lakes in Taveola province, Sioto Lake in Sakazhavesa province, which is inside the capital city Enteve, and the large Lake Vasa in Branoe and Opole provinces.

Alphistia was mostly forested before its permanent settlement. Timber companies cleared about 20 percent of what is now Alphistian territory. Since then a further 25 percent of the land has been cleared for towns and farms. Most of the trees are maple, oak, larch, cedar, walnut, almond,

pine, and birch. There are several parks, including a greenbelt circling Enteve. The soil is good for growing enough food for the population, and imports are generally limited to some tropical fruits and vegetables.

The climate is northern continental with four distinct seasons. This means winters are cold, windy and can be icy with frozen lakes and rivers. There is moderate/heavy snowfall from December through February. There can be periods with temperatures below -15 degrees Celsius (5 degrees Fahrenheit). Summers are mild with temperatures rarely over 24 degrees Celsius (75 degrees Fahrenheit). Spring and autumn are cool and rainy. The growing season is about 145 days per year.

Population

In the most recent census, Alphistia had a population of 224,000. Alphistia was settled in recent decades by a small group of pioneers, mostly from the USA and Canada. They were members of Project Alphistia, which was established to provide a place to live for people seeking a refuge from the collapse of political, economic, and social norms in their home countries. The goal of the Project has been to provide a stable home for its members, and to create a new society, with its own language and culture, based on the ideals of humanism, democracy, a social market economy, and harmony with nature.

While most of the immigrants are from the USA, a small majority come from other countries of the world. A steady number made their way to Alphistia in the last 15 years, until most of those who wanted to come have been able to do so. In recent years, the number of arrivals has decreased. A few have also emigrated, but the population has remained stable due to a low birth rate.

Alphistia is a predominantly urbanized country, although there are no large cities. The capital Enteve is the biggest, with 102,000 people. Most of the other towns are in the 3,000-10,000 range. The second largest town is Tava with 24,000 inhabitants, and the third largest is Usta, with 15,000. Most of the other towns are in the 3,000-10,000 range. There are some smaller towns and about 50 villages, with a few hundred inhabitants each. Most of those living in the smaller settlements are farmers. There are not many individual farmsteads, since farm owners can easily get to their land from nearby towns and villages.

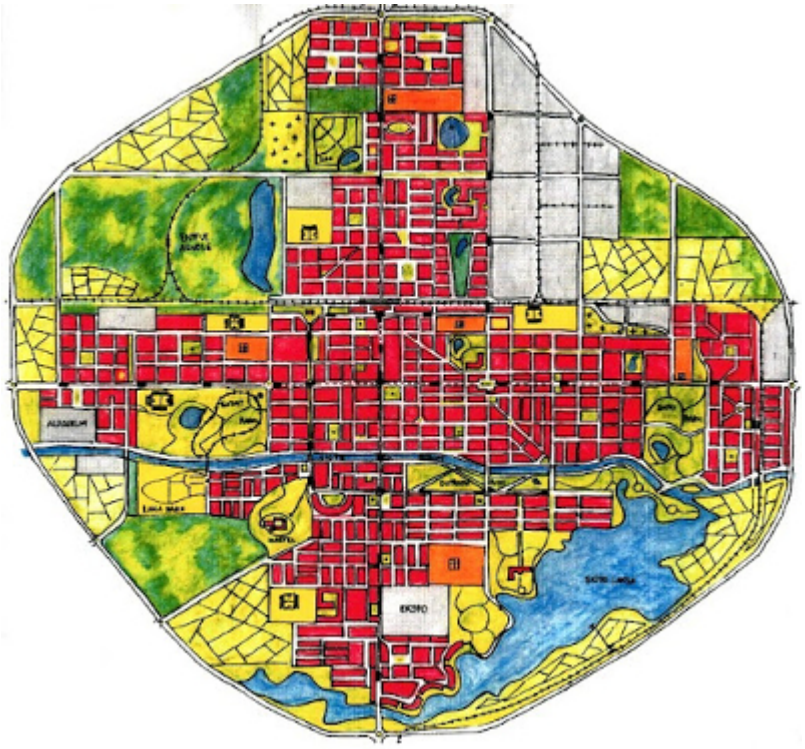
Provinces

Alphistia has nine provinces. They are: Sakazhavesa, Taveola, Dalvarne, Valeta, Morea, Opole, Branoe, Sioto, and Arden. Following is a short description of each province:

Sakazhavesa

Sakazhavesa is Alphistia's largest province by population. It is located in the east-central part of the country. Enteve - the capital of Alphistia and its biggest city, is located here. Sakazhavesa's population is 108,150.

Enteve has a population of 102,000. It is on both sides of the Sioto River, which runs east to west across the country. Enteve is a lively city as the political, economic, educational, and cultural center of Alphistia.



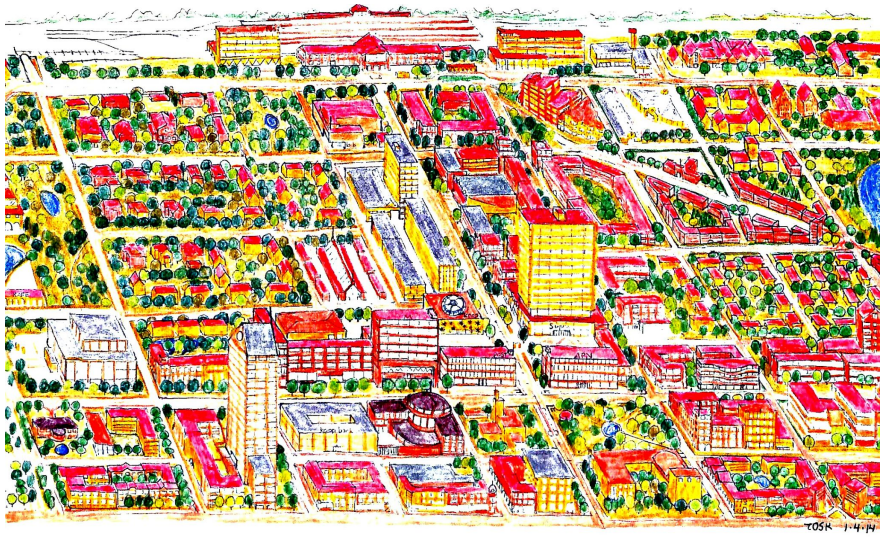
Enteve is compact with many parks and green areas. Most people live in high-density but low-rise neighborhoods, with all the shops and services for daily life within just a few minutes walk. The city has excellent public transit, using trams to connect all the districts of the city to the center and to each other. Several tram stops are underground in the central area.

The northeast part of the city is the industrial district. The entire built-up area is surrounded by woods with a circular road forming the border for the

city.

To the west of Enteve is Alfa, a settlement where immigrants live for several months while work and housing is found for them. Intensive language courses are also offered as needed. Nearby is the Lesenum Airport, and the town of Kenova. North of Enteve are the satellite towns of Arvolea and Sporeto. Sporeto has many weekend cottages, and a notable summertime arts festival. South of Enteve are many farms, near the village of Sutrade. Many Enteve residents have garden plots around the province, usually located near railway stops.

Population by town and village:
Enteve-102,000, Alfa-200, Kenova- 2400, Sporeto-300, Sutrade-250, Arvolea-3,000 Total-108,150.



Taveola

The province of Taveola is in the central region of Alphistia, bordered on the east by Sakazhavesa, the west by Valeta, the north by Dalvarne, and the south by Opole. It is the country's most industrialized province, although agriculture and recreation are also important. The population is 31,500.

Tava is the capital of the province and the second largest city in the country, with a population of 25,000. East and west of the city center are pleasant residential areas. A tram line connects each side to the train station, and north of the railway tracks is a large industrial and warehouse area.

To the east of Tava is the university town of Tilioma. The tramline connects the two. A protestant cathedral is located in Tilioma.To the south of Tava is the Prater region. The small town of Kloster is the region's center. The country's Catholic cathedral is located here. The local monastery is very well known for its excellent wines, ciders and cheeses. Prater is a rich farming area that extends southward into Opole province. Northwest of Tava are the Sestrean Lakes - three beautiful lakes of similar size. This is an area with many weekend cottages, and also a winter sports and holiday center in the town of Laikal. Each year in February there is the Laikal Film Festival, which premieres local and foreign productions.

Population by town and village:

Tava-25,400, Tilioma-5,000 Laikal-500, Kloster 600. Total-31,500.

Dalvarne

Dalvarne is the largest province in the country by size. Its population is 22,800. It is in the northern part of the country, along Lake Usta. The capital is the city of Usta, with a population of 15,000.

Usta is an industrial town with the country's largest fish processing center. It is also the main port of entry, connected by ferry to Kampen on the north shore of the lake. Usta has a tramline connecting its northern districts to the center, and then goes eastward to the campus of the Tekna, Alphistia's technical university.

The railway line continues north of Usta along the lakeshore, passing through the spa and resort towns of Leva, Provinse, and Vakasa, all popular with vacationers. There are also many weekend cottage colonies and campsites in this area. The inland area is mostly forested hills, although the eastern third of the province is mostly flat with many farms in the area. The village of Drovne has the country's largest Jewish community.

Population by town and village:
Usta-15,500, Drone-500, Leva-3,000, Province-500, Vakasa-2,400, Soliste-500, Havense-400. Total-22,800.

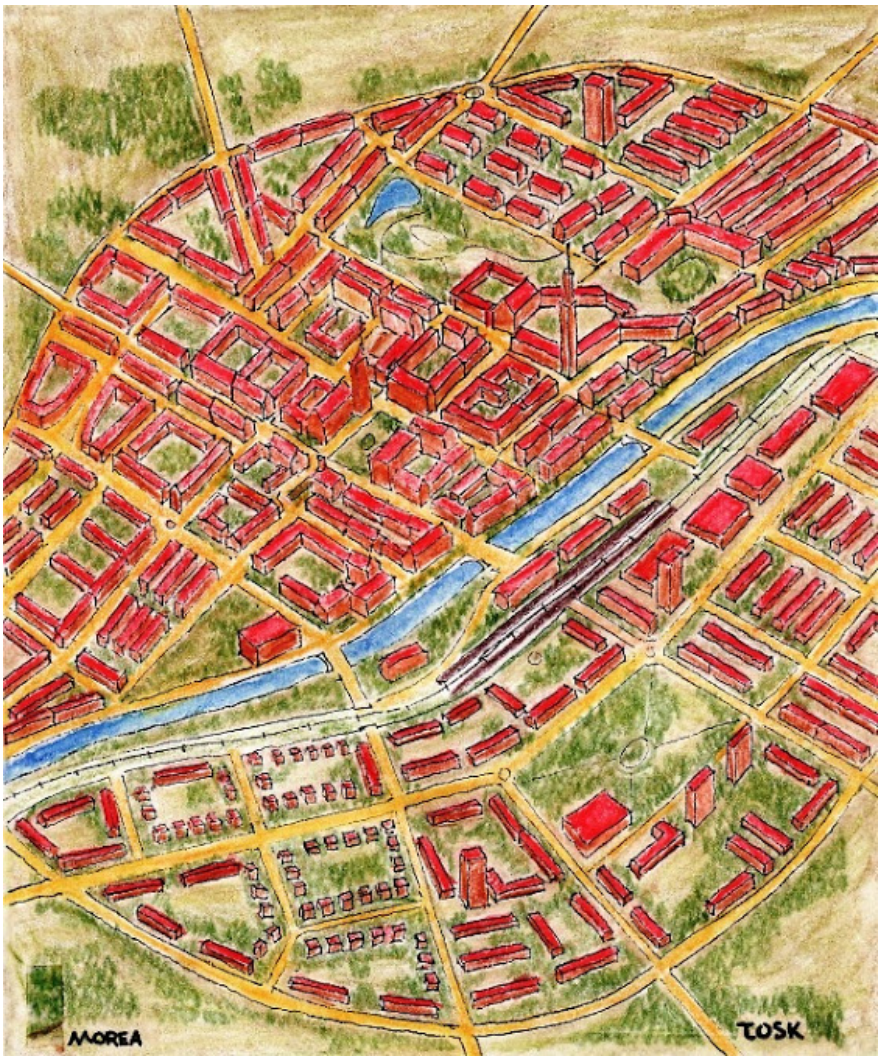
Valeta

Valeta province is in the western part of Alphistia. Its population is 12,400. It is part of the main industrial region of the country, adjacent to Taveola. The towns of Kanaha and Katova are factory towns, with many of the cooperative enterprises that make consumer goods and process foods for the population.

The capital of the province is Kanaha, with a population of 6,200. Like all Alphistian towns, it is well planned and is a pleasant place. Nearby Katova is where "Velenvad" (Variety) is located. It makes many of the home

appliances Alphistians use, and many small household items and tools. Aviolta to the north is a fishing town on Lake Usta with a processing center. Also in the north is Lonera, considered one of the most beautiful parts of the country. There is a popular music camp for young people next to the town's lake. South of the capital is Pervola, with many dairy farms nearby.

Population by town and village:
Kanaha-6,200, Katova-3,000, Lonera-300, Aviolta-2,400, Pervola-500.
Total-12,400



Morea

Morea is in the southwestern corner of Alphistia, mostly consisting of a peninsula surrounded by Lake Usta. It is an important farming and fishing area in the country. The two biggest towns, Morea and Visenen, have

many workshops and small factories. The population of the province is 14,100. Morea is in the dairy heartland of Alphistia, with many such farms near the villages of Bardanste, Davidika, and Vere.

The capital is the town of Morea, considered one of the most beautiful in Alphistia. It is modeled after a traditional European-style market town. Most of the factories in the province are in nearby Visenen, which also is known for its fishing industry.
The village of Remko is known for its research park affiliated with the Tekna in Usta, and nearby is Visenen, known as the “Music Town”. Instruments are made there, and also a sound studio is used by many of the country’s musicians to record.

Population by town and village:
Morea-6,000, Visenen-6,000, Bardanste-300, Vere-500, Davidika-300, Remko-500, Vertene-500. Total-14,100.

Opole

Opole province is in the south-central part of Alphistia, bisected by Lake Vasa. The land is flat and most of the settled area has been cleared of woods. However the area south of Lake Vasa is heavily forested and hilly (as it is in Branoe as well). The population of Opole is 9,200.

Opole city is the capital and an industrial center. It has food processing factories, as well as for other household goods. In the summer, Opole has a large song festival in an open air theater facing Lake Vasa. North of Opole City is part of the Prater region, with its rich farmland. Dairy farms surround the villages of Nesa, Krakova, and Kerkenes. The village of Krakova is known for its handmade carpets. Along the north shore of Lake Vasa there are the spa towns of Krasne and Ulantea, which have cottages and rest homes owned by the trade unions, as well as many private guesthouses.

Population by town and village:
Opole-6,000, Krakova-1,200, Nesa-500, Kerkenes-500, Krasne-500, Ulantea-500. Total-9,200.

Branoe

Branoe province is located in the south-central part of the country, east of Opole. The landscape is flat and the area north of Lake Vasa is rich farmland. The population is 6,600, which is the smallest in the country.

Branoe city has several factories and many small workshops. There is fishing in the lake with a fish processing plant in the town also. The villages of Solare and Laksalea are on the shore of Lake Vasa and have many recreation spots. A ferry runs across the lake from Solare to the forest preserve on the south shore. There are campsites and trails there but no permanent cottages or residents.

Tepetela in the north is a co-operative farm (called a landartel) and it is the country's biggest provider of honey, since bee-keeping is its primary focus. Private farmers live in the village too and their fields are a short distance away, as is the custom.

Population by town and village:
Branoe-5,000, Kielse-400, Tepetele-400, Laksalea-400, Solare-400. Total: 6,600.

Sioto

Sioto province is in the southeastern part of Alphistia, with a population of 10,700. It is an important agricultural area of the country, with its many private farms surrounding the capital city Sioto.

Sioto is a pretty town, planned on traditional models. It is well-known for its folklore park, which has museum houses representing the many ethnic backgrounds of Alphistia's citizens. There is a very popular folk music festival each summer here as well. The Sioto River Valley to the north is a picturesque area and very popular with Enteve residents for day trips. There are several hiking trails here and boats from the Inflot company bring visitors from the capital for scenic tours. Karas is a pleasant riverside town here. South of Sioto town is Vorala, an industrial center, and several small villages. Notable is the village of Duren, which is the only part of the country that has a significant Roman Catholic population.

Population by town and village:
Sioto: 6,000, Karas-1,500, Vorala-2,400, Duren-300, Skanea-500. Total: 10,700.

Arden

Arden province is in the northeastern part of Alphistia. It is known for its lakes, wooded landscapes, and its farming communes. The capital is Reval. Arden has a population of 8,700.

There are four large lakes in the north of the province and another dozen ponds in the same area. The lakes are mostly surrounded by wooded hills, but there are several communes with truck gardens and greenhouses here. In the central part of the province, south of the Lake District, is a hilly area with the valley of the Arden River passing through it. Reval is located here. Reval is a very cosy town, with a large market hall and several important food processing factories. There is also a winery in the town. Handicrafts are also very important with workshops in arcades along several of the town's main streets.

The villages of Vesa and Lakasa are modeled (in part) on the kibbutzes of Israel. The land is farmed in common and members take many meals together in a communal kitchen. Nearby is the village of Harmonea, which is modeled on the moshavs of Israel: a looser form of cooperative farming. Arden is the stronghold of the Pravikense Felad (People's Party), the most leftwing of the country's political parties. This reflects the radical traditions of the farming coops and the well-organized artisan coops in Reval.

In the northeast of the province is the Ardensper (Arden Dam), which is a large hydroelectric complex providing most of the country with electricity. The village of Ardensper is one of the only communities in the country not directly on a railway line. Regular electric buses connect to the nearest station, in Reval.

Population by town and village:
Reval-5,000, Telas-2,400, Ardensper-300, Vesa-200, Lakasa-400,
Harmonea-400. Total: 8,700.

Chapter 2 - MAKING ALPHISTIA

Alphistia has been carefully planned from the start. The goal has been to develop a new environment for a new society, in which the quality of life is most important. The focus has been to create a sustainable economy, use technology appropriately instead of indiscriminately, and to balance work and leisure for the country's citizens. To achieve these goals, it has been necessary to build a well-planned, comprehensive infrastructure. This has been done through several 5 year plans.

Action Program

Even before the country was settled, Project Alphistia created the Action Program in book form and online. The Program described in detail why and how Alphistia would be established. It outlined the National Plans which subsequently were followed by and large in the first 15 years of the country's history.

The First National Plan focused on building the basics: roads, the railways, an airstrip, a port, and the first towns and farming villages. They also restarted a partly abandoned hydroelectric dam which provided the country with clean and abundant energy. The pioneers had to be hardy because this was difficult work. Many of them were young and idealistic. After the first three years, the second phase of the plans started: arrival of immigrants. Altogether more than 200,000 people arrived within 12 years.

The Second National Plan focused not only on finishing the basic infrastructure, but on culture-building. The Alphistian language was being used now in everyday life, and the institutions to enhance this phenomenon were established: the Houses of Culture, the publishing houses, the schools and universities, communications organizations providing tv shows, films, internet pages, etc. Also enough housing and workplaces had to be provided quickly to absorb the large number of immigrants each year.

The Third National Plan is now almost finished. Immigration has been less in recent years, and now the focus is on improving the quality of the infrastructure, transportation, and services.

Land Use

The small size of Alphistia's territory requires careful land use planning.

When the country was first settled, the locations of Enteve, the capital, and most other towns were already fixed, and development plans had been drawn up.

The first settlement was Leva, on the shore of Lake Usta in Dalvarne province. But Enteve, Tava, and Usta were established within a few months, and in the first three years, most immigrants settled in these towns or in nearby farming villages. By the end of the first 10 years, nearly all the towns and villages in the country now on the map had been established.

Alphistian towns are designed to be low rise but high density. This helps to create real communities where people interact, and minimizes sprawl. All towns have adequate parkland and most have forested areas on their outskirts. Farms are near the towns and agricultural products can be easily processed and sold nearby.

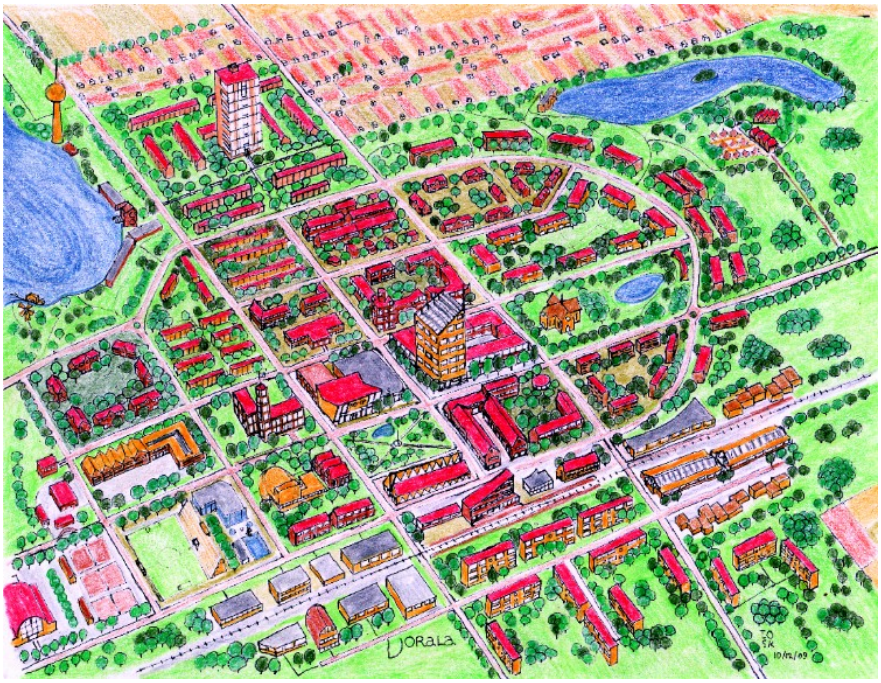
Alphistia's farms are small but intensively cultivated, with high yields per hectare. The country is self-sufficient in food, except for a small amount of imports of tropical foods, spices, and coffee. Many city residents have their own garden plots or weekend cottages where they supplement food from the farmer's markets and shops.

Good roads with bicycle paths connect all the towns and villages to each other. A highly developed train network connects almost every settlement with Enteve, and no town or village is more than one hour from the capital. Electric buses provide service to the nearest train station for the few places not directly on a railway line.

In the towns, it is convenient to walk or use a bicycle for everyday life, including going to and from work. Enteve has a very good transit system based on four electric tramlines, called Metrotram. In the city center, the lines run mostly underground. Electric buses and shared ride/taxi services are available, as well as car/van rentals by the hour or day. Most Alphistians (especially in Enteve) do not find it necessary to own their own cars.

Although land use is strictly controlled, it has resulted in greater freedom for all: easy access to nature, human-scaled streets and neighborhoods, convenient shops, services, schools, workplaces, and leisure facilities. Most important is that car dependency is far from normal in Alphistian. The

quality of life for everyone is improved.



Town Planning

The first principle of Alphistian town planning is to build a humane environment. The largest city in the country has just 100,000 people, and most other towns have populations between 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants. Villages are settlements with fewer than 500 people. Short distances between towns mean that the cultural and shopping facilities of the capital are easily reached by all. Human-scaled planning also emphasizes decentralization, so local shops can easily be reached on foot or bikes. Community centers and cultural institutions are sited in the middle of towns, or in central squares in each district of the bigger cities.

The typical Alphistian town has a compact central area, used every day by most of the local population. Some also choose to live in the city center, so it's also a neighborhood, not just stores, workplaces, and cultural organizations. Usually, there is a central square (or several in the case of Enteve). They serve as focal points for town life. Flanking the town center are residential neighborhoods. In Enteve there are more than 10 "rayonen" (districts). The typical rayon has a local shopping street or two, a neighborhood square, parks and sport facilities, schools, a cultural center, clinics, etc. Often there are also workshops, which provide employment nearby for local residents.

Most Alphistians live in apartments, but these are usually in small

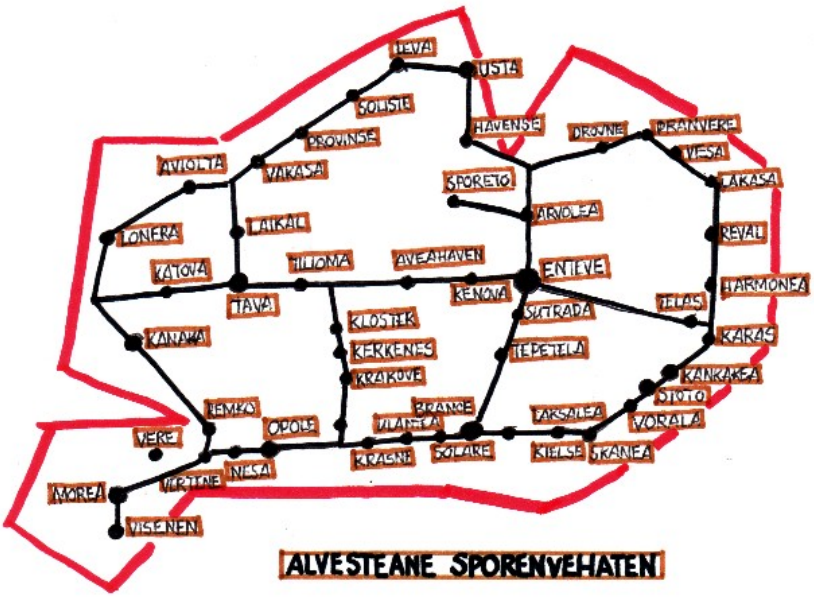
buildings. Regulations require each unit to have a balcony or small garden space. Typical residential streets consist of rows of houses with 2-8 flats, or small garden apartment buildings (many of the oldest houses consist of two floor yellow brick buildings with four units, called “quads’). Each town has some high-rise apartment blocks as well, since some people like the views. Canyons of tall buildings are unknown in Alphistia, however. In Enteve, there are several dozen tower blocks, but they are spaced out throughout the city. In provincial towns there might be 4 or 5. None are more than 15 floors high. Villas (single unit houses) are popular but expensive. Enteve has several neighborhoods of these homes. In the smaller towns, there are many small apartment houses that look like villas but have 2 or more units. In villages, most people live in single unit houses adjacent to their farms.

Transportation

Alphistia’s transportation system is comprehensive. It connects all parts of the country together by road, rail, and paths for bicycles and walking.

Railways

The primary method of moving people and freight is via the electrified railway system of Alvesteane Sporenvehaten, which is state owned. All the towns are on the network, as are almost all villages. There is frequent service between the towns, and villages not directly on a railway line have connecting bus service. Freight trains run mostly at night in order not to disrupt passenger service.



Roads

A four-lane highway connects Usta with Visenen, via Enteve, Tava, and Kanaha. Two-lane roads reach all the other towns and villages. Car ownership is very low (less than 10 percent of households). Since most freight is moved by rail, commercial vehicles are limited to vans or minivans. Many farmers even use electric three-wheeled bicycles to take their crops to market.

Bikeways and footpaths (called “flis/flisen”) are in every settlement, and it is also possible to go by bike or on foot between towns. Nearly every household has at least one bicycle, many of them with electric motors.

Public Transportation

Enteve has a comprehensive, integrated public transit system of trams and electric mini-buses. All taxis are also electric vehicles.

The tram system is called Metrotram, and consists of 4 lines and several dozen stations (in the city center there are 5 underground stations). Articulated trams provide service 7 days a week from 6 am to midnight. Feeder buses connect residential areas to the nearest station, but most people in Enteve live within walking distance of the closest stop. There are also several bus lines that connect neighborhoods. Nearly all daily trips in Enteve are by tram/bus, bicycle, or on foot. Less than 10% of trips are by car, and these are mostly by taxi, shared-ride services, or rentals by the hour.

Tava and Usta also have their own tram systems, with one line each. In smaller towns, most daily trips are on foot or by bike, since Alphistian towns are very compact. Central town squares are always the hub for train and local bus services.

Airport

Alphistia has a small airport 3 km west of Enteve, near the town of Kenova. Scheduled passenger service is provided by Aveal, the state-owned airline. Aveal has 3 electric passenger airplanes, and several electric air freight planes. The passenger terminal has a railway station with frequent service to Enteve.

Ports

Ferry service is provided by Alflot to Kampen, the nearest settlement

beyond Alphistia's borders, on the north shore of Lake Usta. Inflot provides scheduled ferry services and excursion boats on Alphistia's Lake Usta, Lake Vasa, the Sioto River, and the Sestrean Lakes.

Telecommunications

Alphistia has a modern telecommunications system under the control of Alvesteane Telekom, a state-owned company. It operates the post office, a telephone company, and the informatics system. Alvestea Post has offices throughout the country, providing letter and parcel delivery, and a savings bank. Alvestea Telefon provides digital-based landline service and the cell phone network. Alfanet is the country's internet provider and specializes in streaming television and radio programming and access to all Alphistian-based information services. Alfanet is the default gateway to the world wide web.

Chapter 3 - GOVERNMENT

Alphistia is a constitutional republic, with a parliamentary system of government, elected by democratic means.

Governments exercise power, whether democratically, in authoritarian ways, or through dictatorship. Most people alive today do not live in democracies, and democracy itself is not a very old system in practice. While it is true that practice makes perfect, even in democratic societies, there is always the danger of an over-concentration of power, institutionalization of bureaucracy, and the development of unresponsive government. There are also the dangers of corruption and the cynical manipulation of popular opinion which undermine democracy. Not even the oldest, most powerfully democratic countries are immune to such decay from within.

Alphistians would choose their own system. They would have a democratic system based on the best practices of the past and present. The chief advantage would be Alphistia's small size: a population small enough to be accountable to its citizens, through their elected representatives. Local government in particular, would allow for direct citizen participation. Economically, it would participate in globalization on our own terms, to its own advantage. Socially, it would develop a way of life and culture that complements its citizens' shared values based on community, humanism, and the well-being of its people.

The Constitution

The Alphistian Constitution's preamble begins:

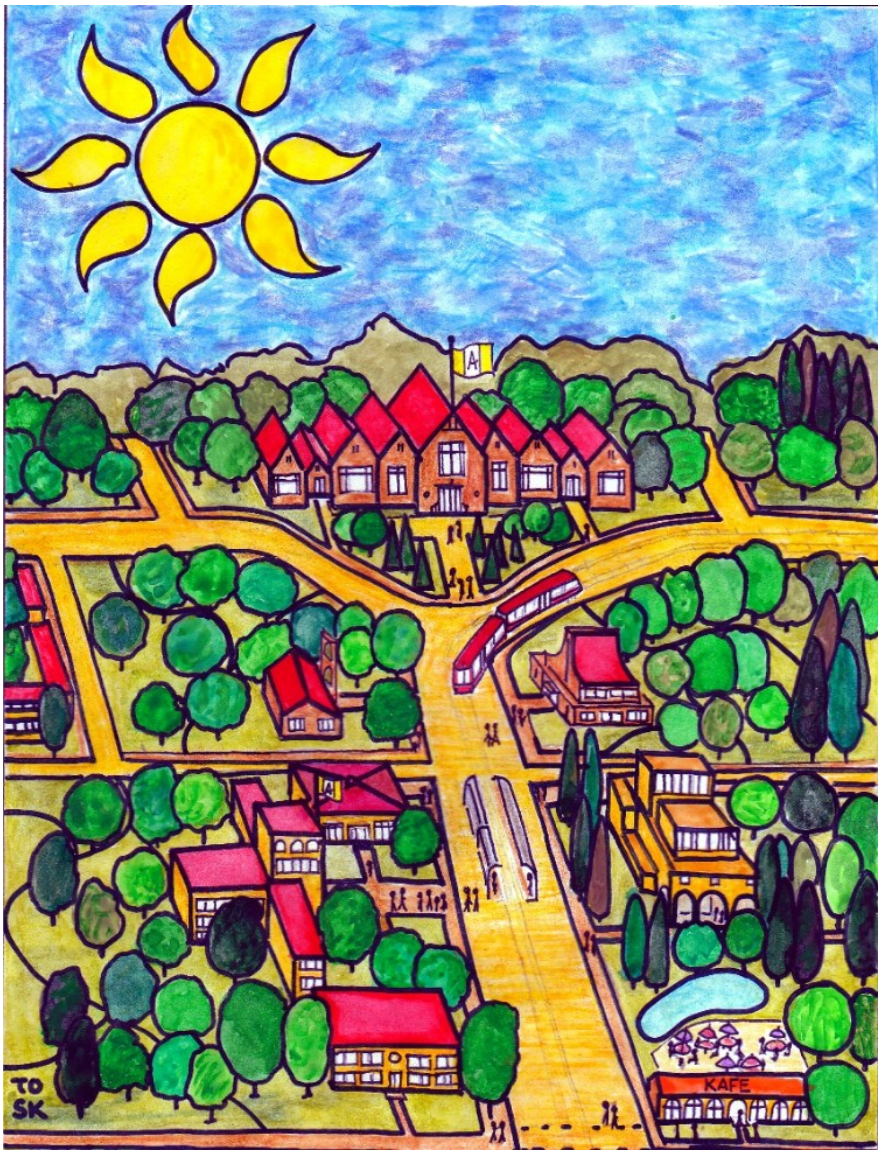
"We are a nation, and we call our country Alphistia. We come from many lands to create a new society, and provide ourselves lives of freedom, justice, order, and prosperity."

It is the basic law for Alphistia, prepared in advance for the nation's use upon its founding. It is modeled on democratic constitutions of other countries, in particular the USA, Canada, and Germany. In Alphistian, the document is known as "De Anselrit" (The First Law).

The Constitution clearly states that Alphistia is a republic, with the source of power coming from elected assemblies. The primary institution of

government is the national parliament, which is called the Kilrete. Elections are democratic between competing political parties, with seats apportioned in the Kilrete by proportional representation. Elections must be held every four years.

The Alphistian Constitution may be amended by the Kilrete, but any proposed changes must be approved by three fourths of its members, and confirmed by three fourths of the voters in a referendum. Non-citizens in Alphistia are treated according to international norms of human rights.



The Charter of Citizen Rights

The Charter of Citizen Rights consists of the articles in the Constitution

which give each Alphistian many human rights: equality before the law without regard to race, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, or religious belief. There is freedom of speech, press, and privacy at home and in the workplace, and written and electronic correspondence is protected from government inspection except when ordered by the Stat Kort.

Citizens may protest peacefully, and if arrested for any reason, must be charged within 24 hours or be released. Citizens are not required to incriminate themselves, and defense attorneys must be available. Alphistians are free to own their own businesses, and if in need, to be provided housing by the government.

The Charter gives citizens the right to organize and be members of labor unions and political parties, and other organizations of civil society. Adult citizens have a right to a basic income during unemployment, disability, while studying in college, or when retired. There are guarantees for paid vacation, sick leave, maximum work hours, and a right to employment or retraining when needed.

Same sex marriage is legal, and freedom to be religious (or not) is guaranteed. Several regulate religious institutions to guarantee separation of church and state. Divorce and abortion are legal, and women have equal rights to men. Guns are strictly regulated, torture is outlawed, and the use of the death penalty is forbidden.

The National Government

Alphistia is a republic with a parliamentary system of government. A national election is held every four years in September. The winning party must win 51 percent of the vote to rule alone, or have the highest number of votes to form a coalition with other parties. There have only been coalition governments in Alphistia's history. The previous government serves as a caretaker government while a new coalition is formed.

The Kilrete

The national parliament of Alphistia is called the Kilrete. It is unicameral and consists of 65 members. Kilrete members are elected for 4 year terms on a national basis (no local constituencies), by proportional representation.

Kilrete members may serve a maximum of 3 terms. All members must retire at the age of 70, or at the end of the term in which they reach that

age.

The Kilrete is the most important government institution in the country. It proposes, decides, and debates the laws of the land, government taxation and government budgets.

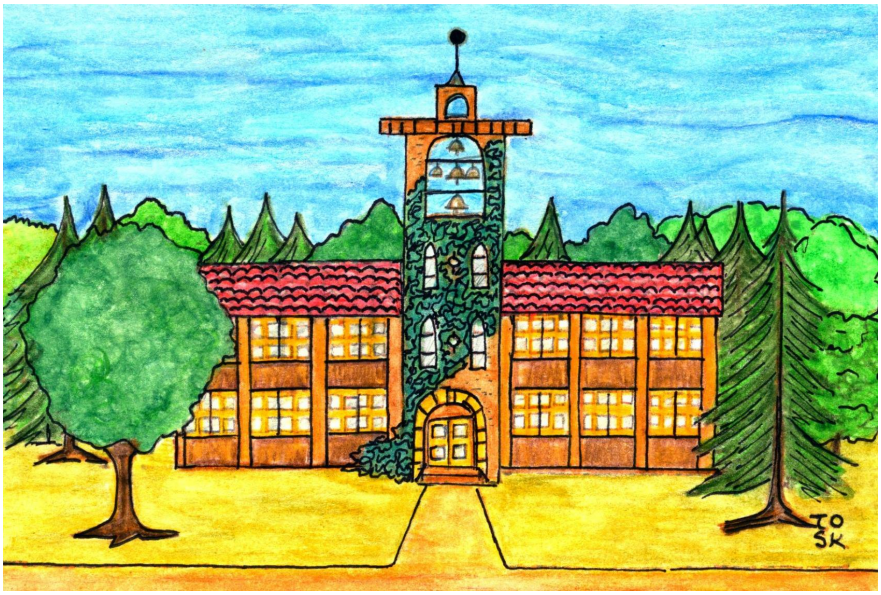
The sessions of the Kilrete are held in the Kilrete House in Enteve. Legislation is proposed by members of the Kilrete, the Spor (leader of the government) or members of the Stat Rad (the cabinet). Proposed legislation is called a “rekord”. A rekord is introduced, discussed, referred to a responsible committee for research and revision, and then brought to the full Kilrete for a vote. If accepted by a simple majority of members, it becomes law. If rejected, it can be sent back to committee for further revision and presented again. A second rejection means the rekord is prevented from another vote, as is.

There are two sessions per year in the Kilrete: the first begins in mid-January and lasts until May. The second begins in early September and ends in mid-December. In a national emergency, the Kilrete can meet in special session, but this is considered to be an unusual circumstance.

Spor and Radek

The leader of the winning party (or the leader of the party with the most votes in a coalition government) becomes the Spor. The Spor acts as president/prime minister of the country.

The Spor names a cabinet when a new government is formed. The cabinet is called the Stat Rad, but since it meets in a building called the Radek, it is colloquially known by that name most of the time. Radek ministers must be members of the ruling coalition, although an exception can be made to choose an honored member of the Kilrete as a minister. Non-Kilrete members cannot be named to the cabinet.



There are 14 ministries: Foreign Affairs, Finance, Security, Justice, Planning, Social Services, Electric Energy, Education, Housing, Culture, Agriculture, Industry, Telecommunications, Transportation.

If in extraordinary circumstances, a government collapses, it still acts as caretaker until the next national election can be held, according to the normal four year schedule. This preserves stability.

Local Government

Local assemblies in the provinces, towns and villages (called “Samenten”) elect members like the national government does, and on the same four year schedule. Town and village councils are generally non-partisan elections. Provincial assemblies generally have 11-15 members, town and village councils have a minimum of 3 members.

The Legal System

The Supreme Court

The Stat Kort is the supreme court of Alphistia. Because of the country's small size, it hears cases of national importance, as well as appeals from provincial courts. It consists of five judges, nominated by the national lawyers association, and confirmed by the Kilrete. Its primary role is to apply the Ritkoda (Law Code) according to constitutional principles. The Alphistian Constitution is considered to be a clear document which does not need continuous interpretation by judges as if they were oracles. All members of the Supreme Court must retire at the age of 75.

Provincial Courts

Each province has a local court, with criminal and civil sections. The court has a single judge, or in serious cases a panel of three judges. Juries are not a part of the Alphistian legal system. Grand juries are not used. A preliminary panel of judges can review a criminal or civil complaint brought by the provincial prosecutor and decide whether a trial should take place.

Trials are held in public, and although videos are made, these are not for public broadcast. Guilt or innocence is determined by the judge through testimony by witnesses for the defense and the prosecutor. The verdict is reached by the majority of the three judges on the panel, or the decision of the ruling judge in simple cases. Punishment is according to the Strafkoda (Punishment Code), and consists of fines and prison time. There is no death penalty, the maximum sentence is life without parole. Most sentences for very serious crimes must be served in their entirety. The prison system consists of two detention centers for men, and one for women. All three prisons are in rural areas. The goal is to try to reform

inmates, and education is offered to train ex-prisoners for a stable life once sentences are completed.

Political Parties

Alphistia has a multi-party system. There are several left and center-left parties, a center-right party, as well as a conservative party. There is no tradition of far right politics in Alphistia, largely because Alphistian "ideology" leans to consensus and moderation.

To be represented in the Kilrete, a party must receive more than 5% of the vote. There are more than a dozen parties registered to field candidates in national elections, and five of them have consistently won seats. These are:

Praxis Felad

Praxis is the social-democratic party of Alphistia, and has been in all national governments. It normally receives about one third of total votes, but has never reached 51% (no party has). It has formed coalitions with the Lesenum, Vertene, and Pravikense parties. It is strongest among voters in Enteve, the "industrial heartland" of Taveola and Valeta, and in Dalvarne. It is similar to most European social democratic parties, particularly in Sweden and Norway.

Lesenum Felad

Lesenum means "nation or native-land" in Alphistian. It is popular with middle-class voters throughout the country, and is considered a moderate, center-right party. It supports the Alphistian welfare state, but is not nearly as socially oriented as Praxis. It is similar to the Democratic Party in the USA, the Liberals in Canada, or the moderate parties in Scandinavia. It normally receives about 25-35% of the total vote. It is open to coalitions with all parties, including Frante, the most conservative. It has been in two coalitions: with Praxis twice, and with Vertenen and Praxis once.

Pravikense Felad

This translates as the "People's Party" and is a left-wing party. It is traditionally the party of radical union members and communal farmers, with anarcho-syndicalist leanings. Some call it "Praxis but with its principles intact", since that party is known for its willingness to compromise. The party is strongest in Enteve, Tilioma (a university town) and Arden province, its biggest stronghold due to the radical farmers there. They usually receive 15-20% of the vote. They refuse to participate in coalitions that would include Lesenum, Frante, or any non-left parties.

They have been in one government with Praxis and the Greens.

Vertene Felad

This is the Alphistian Green Party. Many of Alphistia's first settlers were part of the international green movement, but the party has generally polled no more than 10% of the total vote. They are considered very influential in guiding public policy and are usually key members in forming coalitions with the Praxis party.

Frante Felad

Frante means "freedom" in Alphistian. This is a center-right party, most popular with small business owners and farmers with their own land. They have never received more than 10% of the vote, and usually are nearer 6-7%. They have not been in any national coalitions, but usually are in coalitions at the provincial level, especially in the more rural provinces: Morea, Opole, Branoe, and Sioto. It supports the key fundamentals of the Alphistian welfare state and universal access to benefits, but argues for more private administration and funding. The Pravikense and Vertene parties rule out coalitions with Frante. Praxis is open to the possibility but has not done so, as is true with the Lesenum party as well.

Chapter 4 - ECONOMY

The decline of the globalized economy has meant a new focus on local markets, as well as a more appropriate use of resources, self-sufficiency, and more opportunities for jobs at home. Alphistia has found this strategy to be to its advantage in its nation building project.

The collapse of the neo-liberal model due to political and economic mistakes by world elites has enabled a more humane form of economics to emerge. Ideas such as “small is beautiful” and “economics as if people mattered” and “capitalism with a human face” that were mocked and dismissed have suddenly become serious alternatives to the havoc of extremist economic theories of recent decades. The degradation of our world and the exploitation of billions of people has been unsustainable, and finally a “correction” has occurred. The price has been very high.

The creation of a smaller nation state like Alphistia has been one of the more positive outcomes of recent troubling times. A social-economic system has been established that seeks to provide stable and prosperous lives for Alphistia’s citizens. In some ways, this has meant choices had to be made. Profits and “innovations”, or a balanced way of life without constant crises and disastrous impacts for ordinary people? The result is not a utopia, but a workable system.

Alphistia has an economy based largely on cooperative economics. In previous decades this was an uncommon model. Although co-ops existed all over the world and were often successful enterprises, no country had a cooperative economy. The closest was in the Basque region of Spain, where a large network of co-ops called Mondragon has existed since the early 1950s. It has provided work, consumer goods, services and banking for hundreds of thousands of its members. Mondragon has been profitable, and is most remarkable in avoiding unnecessary layers of management, while being innovative and responsive to its membership and society at large.

Cooperatives

Most of Alphistia’s largest economic enterprises are formed as profit-making cooperatives. Two companies: Ko-Op and NK (National

Konsument) compete with one another to manufacture goods, and provide services in the national economy, and to market their production to the consumers in the retail distribution networks.

Co-ops are independent enterprises, i.e. they are not government owned or controlled by private owners. They are structured like publicly-traded companies with shareholders, but the owners are the members, who elect a management council. The council hires the top manager/s and they are accountable to the co-ops members. Instead of a system where “he who has the gold rules”, each co-op member has one vote, one share.

Trade unions are still important, because they represent ALL workers in the country, and negotiate working conditions, pay, and benefits with co-ops, privately-owned companies, and state enterprises. Except for sole proprietors, most workers in Alphistia are union members.

State-owned Companies

All the natural resources of Alphistia are owned by the Alphistian people, and managed by state-owned enterprises. The primary resource is water power, which provides a great part of the country’s electricity. A very small amount of petroleum-based products are imported by the government and need to be rationed to companies. Fortunately the Alphistian economy is almost 100% self-sufficient in providing its energy needs through non-carbon based resources.

National infrastructure is also state-owned: the railways, roads, the national airline, the telecommunications company, the post office, shipping, and local transit.

Banking and insurance are partly state-owned and partly co-operative. The companies compete with each other to provide services to the state, economic enterprises, and consumers.

Private Companies

Any individuals or partners can start their own companies. Most private companies are sole-proprietorships or family businesses, however. These companies thrive providing personal services, including restaurants and cafes, repairs of all kinds, personal care like barbers or beauty salons etc. When companies grow, they usually transform into cooperatives, due to tax incentives. There are only a few private companies with more than 100 employees.

Industry

Due to the unstable economic conditions worldwide in recent decades, Alphistia has focused on providing goods and services for its domestic market. Imports are limited to products that are very difficult or expensive to substitute with local goods. Even coffee and tropical fruits are grown in climate-controlled greenhouses to reduce imports. Exports are also limited, due to distance from markets and expensive transportation.

Alphistia does not have large industrial works, since the domestic market is not big enough. Instead there are several co-ops with many small workshops. The largest of these is Velenvad (Variety), which has its base in Valeta province. Ko-Op has several similar enterprises in Tava, while NK (National Konsument) has theirs in Enteve, Usta, and Kanaha. Additionally there are several hundred small co-ops called “artelen” (circles/groups) in towns around the country. These are usually grouped in arcades in industrial zones. There are also many craft, personal service, and even restaurant “artelen”.

Agriculture

Private farming dominates the agricultural sector of the Alphistian economy, although farms are small (usually under 5 hectares). The farmers do use co-ops for equipment, repair services, water resources, and for processing and distribution of their output. There are about 5000

private plots and they provide the vast majority of the food consumed in the country. Many city dwellers also have garden plots, usually just adjacent to the towns where they live, although some have weekend cottages (vilnen) in rural areas. A large amount of garden fruits and vegetables are canned by gardeners and sold to co-op companies that distribute the products in the stores or in farmer markets.

Alphistia also has two types of co-op farms, modeled on communal settlements in Israel. The kibbutz is the model for three of these communities, while half a dozen more are modeled on the moshavs. A kibbutz-type settlement has more communal aspects: group meals, shared farming of the land, etc. A moshav-type settlement has a mix of shared farming as well as individual plots, and families do not have shared meals. Both types are called “landartelen” (farming circles/groups).

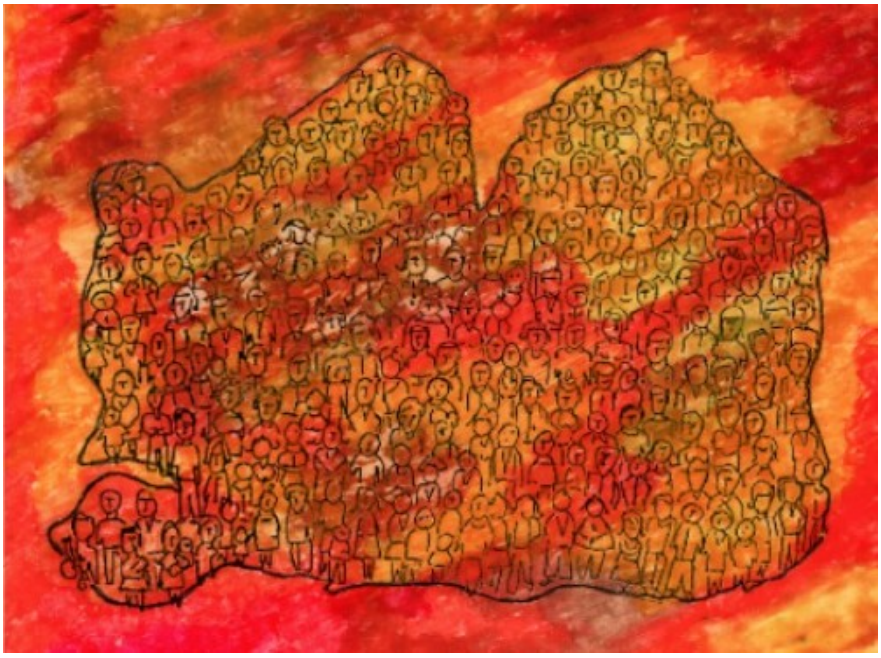
Alphistia has four distinct seasons and a relatively short growing season. This has led to the development of many greenhouses to grow food year round, or that would otherwise not grow at all in the local climate.

Services

The service sector of the Alphistian economy includes banking, insurance, transportation, communications, retail, and personal services.

The state provides the railroads and roads, and runs the passenger and freight train services, public transit, and the national airline and boat fleets. Truck and van hauling is provided by co-ops made up of private vehicle owners. Taxis, vehicle rentals, and ride-sharing services are provided by Taksi Ko-Op, Rentex, and Vevase co-ops.

The Bank of Alphistia is state-owned and issues the national currency (the “perante” and “pengo”). It also provides consumer banking services. Alvestea Post runs a savings bank as a co-op: Pravikense Sparenbank. Ko-Op Bank is the co-operative systems investment bank which also provides full consumer banking services. Insurance services are provided by two competing companies: the state-owned Pravikense Sekeren, and Ko-Op Sekeren. Alvesteane Telekom is state-owned and provides telephone and internet infrastructure. They also provide Alfanet, the gateway to the worldwide web. Ko-Op Mobil and state-owned Alvesteane Telefon provide both digital “landline” and cell phone services.



Chapter 5 - SOCIETY

Alphistia's pioneers built a new society different from the countries they left behind. Their hope has been that their new environment would give them a better quality of life. The emphasis is on shared values and a communitarian outlook, instead of the cult of individualism that dominated so many societies. This has meant Alphistia has universal social services, an economy focused on co-operatives, and living in harmony with the environment.

Those who came to Alphistia wanted to live in a society that respects education and lifelong learning, not to go to school simply for job training. They also wished to live not as drones and consumption automatons, but to enjoy their lives on their own terms. They have created institutions that complement their needs and desires, which don't exploit their fears. Alphistia's politics is non-confrontational and consensus oriented, the media is not a propaganda machine for commercial interests seeking profit from endless culture wars and manufactured controversies.

Alphistia was not intended to be a utopia, but a respite from the many dystopias already existing. Many have come here to live, some experiencing great difficulty to do so. The results are far from perfect, but

Alphistia's existence is a testimony to its success.

Social Policy

One of the most important aspects of Alphistia's shared value system is that a person's life should be more than just work. One's self-definition and perception by others should not be overly concerned with what a person "does for a living". Instead the focus is more "what one does with their life". Those who created Alphistia have felt that a society where work, wealth, and status were most important is not only unhealthy but unpleasant.

As a result, education and leisure complement work instead of being subordinate to it. The Alphistian work world is flexible and humane. Material expectations are not so high that people feel pressured to overwork. All Alphistians are guaranteed a minimum standard of living, whether they work, go to school, are sick, disabled, or retired. If they want to work more hours, of course a higher standard of living is the result, but there is no social pressure to be in a neverending rat race.

Many in the workforce work a four-day week. The 8 hour day/32 hour work week is considered the norm. In any case, employee benefits are state-mandated and universal to all workers: paid time off, sick days, holiday pay, and retiree pensions, access to healthcare, disability and workman's compensation.

Such an extensive social welfare state is of course very expensive. It is funded through taxes: progressive income taxes, a value-added tax, profit taxes on economic enterprises and tariffs on imported goods. Most Alphistians are more concerned about their net income each month than what their tax rates are. Income taxes average 30-40% of a household's income, but rents are capped to a maximum of 25% of income, and most Alphistians do not own a car. There are few medical expenses and tuition for schools through university is free. Alphistians spend their disposable income on leisure: hobbies, vacations, weekend cottages and the like.

There are 10 paid national holidays each year, and a worker starts with 20 vacation days per year. Vacation time is portable, as are sick days, which accumulate at 1 per month at full pay. If a person uses all sick leave, they move to the disability system, and receive a pension of 60% of their former income.

Of course since Alphistians work fewer hours, their incomes are lower than

in some other countries. Most in Alphistia feel their system works well for them: they have a good work/life balance, and social mores are egalitarian. A simple life is not equated with poverty, and people are content with comfort, leisure, time with friends and family, and a less stressful way of life than is the norm in many parts of the world.

Social Equality

The Alphistian constitution protects its citizens from discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, sex, or sexual orientation. It is acknowledged that the lack of official discrimination does not mean there is no unofficial social discrimination, but there is great effort to minimize these antagonisms.

Schools are a primary place for the socialization of youth, and the curriculum teaches tolerance, consensus building, and conflict resolution right from the start. Churches, community centers, houses of culture, and the media help to reinforce these concepts as part of what it means to be an Alphistian.

Alphistia is a multiracial and multicultural society. More than 30% of the population was born outside the USA or Canada. About 35% of the population is multiracial, black, Asian, or of Hispanic origin. Most Alphistians know English as a first or second language, although more than 85% of the population uses Alphistian as its everyday language. The remaining 15% know Alphistian passively or are actively learning it.

National policy is to create Alphistian values in a multiracial and multicultural context. The development of new cultural norms in a new society takes time, but due to the educational system and the influence of Alphistian popular culture, Alphistia has come a long way quickly. This is largely due to the country being settled by people from around the world choosing to immigrate here, who are committed to Alphistia's ideals.

The role of women in Alphistian society is active and inclusive. Most women work, although due to family duties, many work part time. There is a comprehensive network of low cost daycare and after-school facilities that most families use. Parental leave is available for both mothers and fathers after the birth of a child.

Women take part in politics and administration at a high rate in Alphistia. Partly this is due to the historical role of many women in Project Alphistia and the creation of the country. 40% of elected officials are women, 3 of 5

judges on the High Court are women, and about 35% of managers in economic enterprises are women. The latter is considered to be too low, and efforts are being made to improve this percentage.

There are no legal restrictions against homosexuality in Alphistia, and social tolerance on this issue is higher than in most countries of the world. This extends to all members of the LGBT+ community. The Alphistian Health Service offers full transition support to the transgendered community, as needed. Same-sex marriage is legal, as is adoption of children by same-sex couples or individuals.

Social Services

The Alphistian social security system is comprehensive and universal, and operated by the state. It allows the citizens of Alphistia to fully enjoy their lives without worry about providing for their basic needs.

The cornerstone of the system is The Alphistian Health Service, known colloquially in Alphistian as “de Medkasa”. The AHS provides health insurance to all for free premiums, no deductibles, no maximum out-of-pocket costs, no surprise bills, and minimal charges for doctor visits and prescriptions and ambulance use. There are no fees for hospital stays, rehabilitation care, psychiatric care, nursing home care, or hospice care. Dental services are free for preventive care, extractions and fillings. Crowns and more extensive procedures are charged at cost.

Each patient chooses a doctor at their local primary care clinic. Specialists are grouped in larger clinics, usually affiliated with the local hospital. The largest hospitals are the National Hospital, University Hospital, and Enteve Hospital, all in the capital. Each provincial capital has a local hospital.

Preventive care is the focus of the AHS. The network for prenatal and early childhood healthcare is comprehensive. Children are taught good health habits through school and television programs. The elderly are also provided with high quality care. The focus is to keep senior citizens in their own homes. Doctors and other healthcare staff can make house calls if necessary. If they must live in a nursing home, they can live in single flats with some of their familiar belongings, in a less clinical environment.

The University of Alphistia has a medical school and nursing program, and doctors work at the University Hospital during their studies.

The funds for the AHS come from social security taxes, VAT and enterprise profit taxes. There is also a national lottery that supports specialized patient care.

Pensions are the other main task of the social security system. There are three types: old age pensions, disability and unemployment pensions, and student grants. Each pension provides money each month for basic living expenses: enough for rent, utilities, food, and some extra for miscellaneous costs. This is called “De Basik Pense” and is the same for retirement and disability pensions, unemployment payments and student grants.

Retirement pensions are usually enhanced with payments by employees during their working years into “De Provident”, a specialized pension fund. Depending on the amount saved, guaranteed annuity payments supplement the Basic Pension until the death of the recipient.

The disabled receive the Basic Pension. If they are able to work part time, they can earn normal pay rates without reduction of their Basic Pension. Trade union contracts and state support usually provide extra payments for the fully/permanently disabled, especially for services and equipment that will help with daily life.

Unemployed workers receive the Basic Pension for one year, and if still jobless, for longer if they enroll in a job training program. Depending on length of prior employment and income, most workers receive enhanced payments during the first year of joblessness.

University students can receive the Basic Pension if they maintain grades at the level 3 average (on a 5 point scale). They can supplement their living expenses with part time jobs during the school year and summer vacations.

Alphistia’s pensions are universal, which means that at times some might take advantage of the system. This is unavoidable and does not negate the reasons for Alphistia’s comprehensive welfare state. The social costs of not providing for all citizens are higher in a sink-or-swim society. Alphistia’s poverty rate is lower than most other countries, and although it does not have the highest standard of living in the world, Alphistians have a very high quality of life. All Alphistians live with dignity and are

well-served by the system they have chosen.

Housing

Housing in Alphistia is considered like food and water: a necessity that is charged for, but which everyone must be able to afford. Rents cannot exceed 25% of household income, but for most, it is less than that. For those with more money, it is possible to buy a single unit house. Most farmers own their homes, except for those living in the kibbutz/moshav style “landartelen”. Some who rent their apartments in towns own a small plot of land with a cottage for weekend use.

Most Alphistians rent apartments from non-profit housing companies that are organized as co-operatives. The companies build the apartments and compete with each other to provide renters with reasonable costs and amenities. For those with high incomes, very luxurious apartments are available, but most live in more modest, comfortable homes. Older, smaller apartments in towns outside Enteve generally are available at very low rents.

Apartments and houses are not as big as in some other countries, but provide about 22 square meters (225 square feet) of living space per person. The average apartment has 2.3 residents. The most common type is a two bedroom apartment with living/dining area, small kitchen, space for a washer/dryer, bathroom, and includes a balcony/deck or small garden. Most single unit houses have three bedrooms. There are smaller studio and one bedroom apartments for students and pensioners.

Alphistians like to live in smaller apartment houses, and the norm is four to eight unit buildings. In Enteve there are many blocks of row houses with two or three units along tree-lined streets, but the most common type in the whole country are “quads”, two-floor buildings with four units that share a common hall and stairway, arranged in landscaped blocks garden style. Each town also has some tower blocks, most of these are studio or one-bedroom apartments for single people, students, and the elderly.

About 10% of Alphistians have a weekend cottage on a plot of land, and about 25% more have garden allotments (many without a cottage), which are generally on the outskirts of the towns. The cottages are called vilna/vilnen and are generally small. Most are organized into colonies, but wealthier people sometimes have a large vilne on an isolated plot.

Alphistia has no permanent class of homeless people. Enough housing is available for all, and since rent depends on income, everyone is able to have a place to live, even if it is very modest.

Chapter 6 - CULTURE AND EDUCATION

The development of a unique new culture has been the cornerstone of Project Alphistia since its beginning. A nation's cultural environment is the structure in which people develop socially, particularly the young. Alphistia's first settlers wanted to create a society different from what they left, and they hoped this would give people a greater sense of fulfillment.

Language

Most of Alphistia's pioneers were native English-speakers. English however, was not chosen as the official language. It is the world's *de facto* international language, and has been the transmission belt of American popular culture and social mores for decades. To create a new culture, it was felt Alphistia should be a non-English speaking society. The Alphistian language already existed in a basic form. The Alphistian Language Institute was formed to compile an official grammar and dictionary, and to offer courses online and in-person for all those who came to live in Alphistia.

Most Alphistians use their new language in everyday conversation, although nearly everyone knows English as well. Children learn Alphistian as their first language, and it is predicted that within another 10-20 years, Alphistian will be universally used. English will always be taught and used,

since so much of foreign culture, available via the internet, tv, and movies comes from English-speaking countries.
Using their new national language has inspired an enormous amount of cultural output among Alphistians. It is particularly popular for songwriting and telenovelen (soap operas).

Cultural Centers

Enteve is Alphistia's cultural capital, and because the country is not very big, it is easy to get to by train from all towns and nearly every village. The National Opera, National Theater, and Alphistian Symphony Orchestra each have their own building in Enteve. The Enteve House of Culture also has a theater for drama and music performances. Each sector of the city has its own district House of Culture.

In all the provincial towns there are also Houses of Culture. A typical one will have a multi-purpose auditorium for music and theater, a gallery for art shows, arts and crafts studios for local clubs, and classrooms for local adult education courses. Sometimes the local public library will be inside the House of Culture too.

The Arts

The Ministry of Culture sponsors most of Alphistia's cultural activities through its Houses of Culture and national institutions. This allows Alphistia's artists and performers to concentrate on creativity instead of fundraising.

The national opera, drama, and symphony companies have full seasons. Each provincial town has its own music and drama groups, even villages have cultural clubs. In Enteve there are several high quality museums: The Alphistian Gallery of Art, The National Museum, and EKSPO, which has a technology and science museum.

Commercial advertising is restricted in most public places, but public art is encouraged. Alphistia has a very active artistic posters tradition, and these are both "art for art's sake" and advertisements for upcoming cultural events.

There are several colonies where artists and musicians can live near each other in beautiful parts of the country. They sponsor workshops for students at all age levels and there are popular music festivals and art fairs in the summer at these locations.

Alphistia is also known for its active popular music industry. Several hundred groups perform regularly, and there are tours of groups at youth clubs, Houses of Culture, and discos. Nearly all songs are sung in Alphistian, which in the country's early years helped new arrivals learn the language more quickly and easily. Each summer there is a big music contest in Opole on Lake Vasa that is very popular.

Crafts are also a very popular hobby and craft fairs are held all around the country, particularly at the year end holiday season.

Books

The Alphistian publishing industry produces almost 1000 new titles each year - one book for every 220 inhabitants. This is one of the highest rates per capita in any country of the world. Nearly all libraries in the country have complete inventories of Alphistia's printed books. There is also a large amount of material from all sources in Alphistian on the web.

There are three main publishing houses: Tre Kaunas Randelen (TKR), Alvesteane Nomikle, and Neuve Elde. They are all run as profit-making cooperatives owned by their own writers and editors. The government printing house also publishes many books, brochures, policy papers, and textbooks. As far as possible, imports of books from foreign countries continue, in spite of difficulties in recent years. Reprints of out-of-copyright books from the internet is a micro-industry in Alphistia, with most of the titles going to the Alphistian National Library. There are more than one million titles in all of the country's libraries. The biggest collections are the National Library, the University of Alphistia's library, and the Enteve Public Library.

Self-publishing is a popular hobby in Alphistia - even children write their own books. Inexpensive copies can be produced on demand via modern online printing services. Many like to write family histories or personal memoirs.

Media

Media organizations are cooperatives owned by the editors, writers, and other employees of each enterprise. Alvesteane Televise (ATV) and Alvesteane Radio (AR) are partly state-funded, but most of their funding comes from license fees paid by all those with televisions, radios, and computers, as well as limited commercial advertising (in blocks, between

programs). ATV and AR are autonomous organizations that make their own broadcasting decisions.
ATV has two channels, and broadcasts 7 days per week. Programming from foreign countries is always broadcast with subtitles. About 40% of content is local programs in Alphistian. For a fee, subscribers can stream popular international channels. All radio programming is broadcast in Alphistian. A huge choice of international radio broadcasting is available for free on the internet.

Alphistia has a small film industry which releases about 7-10 feature films per year, as well as documentaries and news programs. ATV also produces its own soap operas, game shows, variety shows, and musical programs. These are always in Alphistian. Few current films from abroad are available to view in cinemas, but subscribers can pay to stream what is produced on their computers or tv sets. Alphistian cinemas show mostly classic films and local productions.

There are two daily newspapers published in printed and online versions: De Alvesteane Teden (The Alphistian Times) and Infodae. The Alphistian Times also publishes an online summary each day in English. There are about 40,000 paid subscribers to the online and printed versions of the newspapers. Most Alphistians get their daily news from ATV, including its news summaries written for the web.

Each province publishes a weekly newspaper in print and on the internet, and each political party publishes monthly magazines. There is one weekly newsmagazine called “Das Vek” (This Week) and a weekly listings guide called “Panorama”. There are other magazines published for specific audiences: a youth magazine, a children’s magazine, and several women’s magazines. There is also a general cultural monthly called: “Kultura en Levte” (Culture and Life).

Schools

All schools in Alphistia are public schools and do not charge tuition. This includes education through PhD programs. Funding, curriculum, and teacher training is administered by the Ministry of Education.

There are nursery schools and daycare programs before the age of five for children whose parents are at work. Formal education begins with kindergarten at age 5, and is for three hours per day, five days per week. Most children attend kindergarten but it is not mandatory. About 40 percent

of children attend preschool programs.

General elementary and secondary education begins at age six and runs for 12 years. The first six grades (called “formen) are in elementary schools. These are called “basik skolen” in Alphistian and are in buildings located close to students’ homes. In forms 7-12 are in separate buildings and consist of two parts: “medel skola” for forms 7,8,9 and “hoye skola” for forms 10, 11, 12. These also tend to be neighborhood bases, but are usually not as small as basik skolen. Alphistian education is not oriented toward very large buildings. They are usually built on traditional lines with many windows in classrooms and with trees around the buildings and playgrounds.

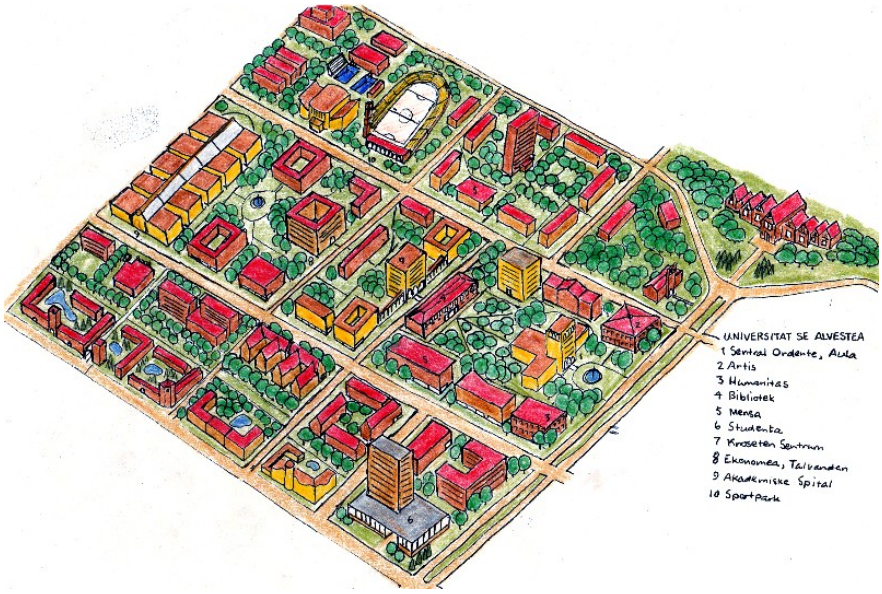
Several teaching systems are used: there are programs using Montessori and Pestalozzian methods, and specialized schools for those gifted with art, music, technical talents. Students must remain enrolled through grade 12. There are special programs for students with learning disabilities or who otherwise have special needs.

High schools are comprehensive, although often they will be part of local consortiums which provide special programs and classes for technical education etc. There is no early streaming into university/non-university tracks.

Teachers are trained at the University of Alphistia, Tilioma University and the Tekna.

Universities

There are three university level institutions in Alphistia: two general colleges and one technical institute. All are administered by the Ministry of Education and are free.



The University of Alphistia is in Enteve. It has an enrollment of more than 5,000 students. This university consists of several colleges and institutes that offer degrees from certificates for one to two year programs through doctoral programs awarding PhDs. The University of Alphistia has the only medical school, nursing program, dental school, and law school in the country.

Tilioma University is in the town of that name in Taveola province. It has an enrollment of about 2,500. It specializes in the humanities, except for two specialized programs: a seminary that trains Protestant clergy, and a business college that has its campus in nearby Tava, called De Handelskola.

De Alvesteane Teknike Institut is in the city of Usta in Dalvarne province. It is commonly known as “De Tekna”. It has general and advanced degree programs in engineering, computer science, and other technical subjects. It also provides certificate programs in many aspects of machine and technology, including computer programming, maintenance and repair of machines etc. The Tekna has an enrollment of 3000 students.

Normal coursework at all universities is two semesters per academic year for four years. At graduation, a student receives the “Anse grad” (literally “first degree), which is the equivalent of a bachelors degree. Some students go on to the “Tavse grad” after one to two years of further study, the equivalent of a masters degree. Professional studies for law last for three years, and the same for medical and dental degrees. These are equivalent to the PhD, which is generally two to four years beyond a masters program. Many certificate programs last for just one to two years and are common for training in government service, allied health jobs, business and administration tasks, and technical proficiency. The degree for these courses is called “Doklad” (a certificate).

Lifelong Learning

There is a great emphasis in Alphistia on open access to knowledge and culture. A very popular aspect of this policy is the national network of schools for adult learners. Two organizations provide courses: De Opad Skola (The Open School) and folkenskolen (folk schools).

The Open Schools organize short term courses offered mostly in the evening or on weekends. Students can also take courses online. Most Houses of Culture have several classrooms where Open School courses can be taught, if not then local Hoye Skolen host them, or even local public libraries.

Open School courses are very popular and although they do charge fees, the costs are extremely low. They are non-degree programs, although for those studying foreign languages and some other subjects, there are tests and proficiency exams.

The folkschool movement is modeled on those of Scandinavia. The first were created by N F S Grundtvig, a Danish clergyman and teacher, who

wanted workers and farmers to have access to more than just rudimentary education. Many of the programs today are at dedicated campuses in very beautiful parts of Scandinavia, where students can study and live together for some months, bonding and creating lifelong friendships.

Alphistia's seven folkschools are very similar to the Scandinavian model. Two are located in towns, and five are in beautiful spots in the countryside. There are programs for young adults, working people, and pensioners. They spend several weeks to several months studying together. There are no formal exams or degrees awarded other than a certificate of completion. There are costs for room and board and minimal fees for instruction, but for those of limited means, grants can cover the fees. About 5000 students enroll in folkschool programs each year.

Sports and Leisure

Sports and leisure centers are very popular in Alphistia, particularly since Alphistians have adequate time off from work. Every town has extensive facilities. In Enteve, Tava, and Usta, each neighborhood has a sports park and there are central indoor leisure complexes.

Alphistia does not have a professional sports industry. All competitive sports are played by amateurs, without paid coaches, managers, public relations staff etc. This avoids the rampant corruption that is so notable in pro-sports in other parts of the world, including the Olympics. The primary negative is that Alphistia does not fare well in international competitions, but in recent years instability abroad has meant there have been far fewer chances to compete.

The most popular sports are football (soccer), swimming, and baseball. Hiking and bicycling are also popular. Leisure centers organize exercise classes for all ages.

Religion

The Alphistian constitution guarantees freedom of religion. The government is neutral about a belief in God, and there is separation between church and state. All schools in Alphistia are public, and there is no religious instruction at any level. Students may enroll in after-school institutes that are sponsored by various religious denominations. There are two seminaries in Alphistia: one for training Protestant clergy in Tilioma, and the other is run by the Alphistian Catholic Church in Kloster.

Alphistia is a very secular society. A recent poll indicated that about 50% of Alphistians surveyed believe in some kind of supreme being. About 15% attend religious services each week, and about 35% formally belong to a religious congregation.

Enteve has 20 houses of worship, including a synagogue and a mosque. There are shared buildings for worship that are rented or jointly owned by smaller congregations. This is particularly the case in the provincial towns.

The largest denomination is the Alphistian Catholic Church with 24 congregations. The Alphistian Catholic Church allows women priests, a married clergy, and also blesses same-sex marriages. It has some affiliation with the Anglican Communion. It is separate from the Roman Catholic Church, which has two congregations in Alphistia. The largest Protestant denomination is De Reform Kerk. It consists of united mainline churches such as Methodists, United Church of Christ, Lutherans, and some others with similar beliefs.

On Sunday mornings there is a two hour block of religious programming on

Alphistian television, with a longer schedule on Alphistia's main radio station. There is a publishing coop that provides printing facilities for all the nation's religious groups. The Bible has been translated into Alphistian, as has the Koran and the Book of Mormon.